accept. Instead, benefit of severance amount of Rs. 30,000/-, Rs. 20,000/- depending on the length of employment was introduced Rs. 30,000/- is payable in case of discharge (retirement) of death if the period of continuous employment of the GDS is minimum 20 years, and Rs. 20,000/- if a GDS has completed 15-20 years of employment. On absorption to departmental post, the severance amount of Rs. 20,000/- payable after 15 years of continuous employment.

(c) and (d) Gramin Dak Sewaks are eligible for consideration against the unfilled vacancies of Group 'C' cadre in the promotion quota subject to fulfilling the prescribed conditions given below:-

(i) Gramin Dak Sewaks (GDSs) must have minimum qualification of 10+2 (Senior Secondary) and have put in minimum of 3 years of service.

(ii) Only those GDS shall be eligible who have secured marks not below the marks secured by the last recruit of the relevant category selected in the previous year.

(iii) The Gramin Dak Sewaks should be within 28 years of age (33 years for SC/ST and 31 years for OBC).

However, the recommendation of the Justice Talwar Committee for relaxation of age up to 5 years for the Gramin Dak Sewaks have not been accepted by the Government.

(e) and (f) As regards merger of 50% D.A. with the allowances called Time-Related-Continuity-Allowance (TRCA) of the Gramin Dak Sewaks, there was no such recommendation of the Justice Talwar Committee. However, the basic TRCA of the Gramin Dak Sewaks as drawn on 01.04.2004 has been increased by 5% for all categories of Gramin Dak Sewaks.

TRAI order on reducing international bandwidth prices

2142. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Telecom Tribunal has set aside TRAI order of reducing the international bandwidth prices by upto 70 per cent;

(b) how this decision will affect the IT-enabled service providers in the country since they are the chief users of this bandwidth; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take in view of this decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir. Telecom Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) had upheld the Order issued by TRAI effecting the reduction in international bandwidth prices with effect from 29.11.2005.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Norms for late payment charges

2143. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what are the norms laid down by TRAI for late payment charges;

(b) whether Government are aware that Airtel is charging exorbitant late payment fee from its subscribers;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what steps are being taken to levy reasonable late payment fee from subscribers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No norms on late payment charges have been laid down by TRAI.

(b) and (c) Telecom operators levy charges for late payment of dues from time to time as a part of their credit policy so as to deter their customers from unduly delaying the payment of bills. As per the information obtained from TRAI, M/s Airtel is charging with effect from 18.11.2005, a flat late fee of Rs. 50/- for outstanding dues of upto Rs. 1500/- and beyond that Rs. 75 or 3% of the dues (whichever is higher) subject to a maximum of Rs. 500/-.

(d) Does not arise in view of (a) above.